

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 970

By Holt

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Bethel University.

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate that the members of this General Assembly honor those extraordinary institutions of higher learning that promote education in a manner that has garnered universal acclaim; and

WHEREAS, Bethel University, located in beautiful McKenzie, is one of the oldest and most respected universities in the State of Tennessee and has recently reached a student enrollment of over 5,000 students, yet another significant milestone in its storied history; and

WHEREAS, this esteemed institution has set as its mission the creation of opportunities for members of the learning community to develop to their highest potential as whole persons – intellectually, socially and physically – in a Christian environment; and

WHEREAS, founded in 1842, the institution that would eventually become Bethel University was originally located in McLemoresville, and was an outgrowth of McLemoresville Academy, or the "Brick Academy"; and

WHEREAS, known as Bethel Seminary, the school was operated under the care of the West Tennessee Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and was granted a charter by the State of Tennessee in 1847; and

WHEREAS, Bethel's first president, Mr. Reuben Burrow, would serve twenty years in that capacity, in addition working as a teacher, head of the Theology Department, member of the board of visitors and the school's fundraiser; and

WHEREAS, the Civil War severely impacted the school both physically and financially as its students left to enter military service, with both Union and Confederate Armies causing devastating damage to the facility as each occupied the grounds at various times; by the war's end, Bethel had lost its endowment; and

WHEREAS, reopening in 1865 under the direction of the Reverend B.W. McDonnold, Bethel Seminary accepted women students for the first time; and

WHEREAS, Bethel College relocated to McKenzie in 1872, constructing a 300-capacity brick building, which would be the only facility on the school grounds for the next fifty years; and

WHEREAS, Bethel was closed, along with nine other Cumberland Presbyterian schools, under the Union of 1906, but re-opened and is now the only Cumberland Presbyterian college; and

WHEREAS, building new facilities on land donated by the City of McKenzie in the 1920s, Bethel College's student enrollment survived the Depression era and World War II, despite reaching a low of seventy-five students mid-war; and

WHEREAS, averaging approximately 500 students during the later decades of the 20th century, Bethel achieved a student enrollment of 1,000 students for the first time in 2001, but has since quadrupled its enrollment since 1995, with over 5,000 students attending the school for the 2011-2012 school year; and

WHEREAS, Bethel's recent success is due to a number of innovative programs, including The Success Program, which is a concentrated curriculum designed for adult learners, and the Laptop Initiative, which provides a notebook computer for every full-time student – the first program of its kind in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, becoming Bethel University in March of 2009, the institution's main campus includes a number of facilities, including McDonald Hall, Moore Cafeteria, the Dickey Fine Arts Center, the Burroughs Learning Center, the Roy N. Baker Field House, Prosser Hall, Heritage Hall, University Hall, and the Vera Lowe Center for Student Enrichment, which will soon be joined by Cumberland Chapel, as the groundbreaking for this latest project is set for May 2012; and

WHEREAS, operating satellite campuses in Jackson, Clarksville, Nashville, Chattanooga, and Memphis, Bethel University currently offers more than twenty-five undergraduate programs spanning six divisions and nine colleges: Basic and Applied Sciences,

Business, Education, Behavioral and Health Sciences, University Honors, Liberal Arts, Mass Communication, the University College, and the College of Graduate Studies. These colleges oversee more than fifty-five programs, including doctoral studies, offering Master of Arts, Master of Science, and Master of Business Administration degrees; and

WHEREAS, this dynamic growth has been led by the current head of Bethel University, Dr. Robert Prosser, who has served as the school's thirty-ninth President since his ascension to the post on July 25, 1998. He previously held the post of Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church for eleven years and was a pastor of First Cumberland Presbyterian Church in McKenzie from 1971 to 1986; and

WHEREAS, over the course of its history, Bethel University has positioned itself as a premiere institution for higher learning by offering an unprecedented and unparalleled education to thousands of students who, in turn, have improved their communities, this state, and this nation; and

WHEREAS, the education of every Tennessean is of paramount importance, and the people of this State are fortunate indeed to be served by the dedicated faculty, staff, and students of Bethel University; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate Bethel University on its continuing success and growth as it surpasses 5,000 in total student enrollment. We commend its outstanding faculty and staff for their ongoing commitment to ensure the education of their fellow citizens and extend our best wishes for every continued success as an academic institution of the highest order.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.